

SociAl competences  
and FundamEntal Rights  
for preventing bullying



# safer

SAFER - NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 5 - DECEMBER, 2023

# THE SAFER PROJECT

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Be the  
**HERO**  
for  
reducing  
bullying  
to **ZERO**

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Fourth  
FACE-TO-FACE  
meeting

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## OVERVIEW

# 1

Welcome  
to the 5th Issue of the  
**SAFER** Newsletter!

**SAFER** - SociAl competences and FundamEntal Rights for preventing bullying is a three-year project funded by the Erasmus + Programme (KA3- Social inclusion and common values: the contribution in the field of education and training) of the European Union that aims to develop and implement an innovative method for preventing school violence and bullying for fostering inclusive education.

The project is coordinated by the Fondazione Hallgarten Franchetti Centro Studi Villa Montesca in Italy and the partnership consists of the Giunti

Psychometrics Srl (Italy), The Cyprus Observatory on School Violence - Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (Cyprus), the Center for Intercultural Dialogue (North Macedonia), the Association Roditeli (Bulgaria), the Universidade do Algarve (Portugal), the European Anti-Bullying Network (Belgium) and the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Crete (Greece). The consortium has developed training and educational material for teachers, parents, students and members of the educational community.



**Be the HERO  
for reducing  
bullying to ZERO!**

## The **PROGRESS** of the project

In this Newsletter, you will find out more about:

**SAFER**  
Pilot Phase

**Students'**  
Voices

**Preparation**  
of the Final  
Conference

### **A. A. Pilot Phase**

#### **i** Italy

Villa Montesca Foundation has actively involved over 300 students from six schools in Italy, comprising three primary schools, one pre-secondary school and two secondary schools (students of the first year) in the pilot program featuring the **SAFER** WSCA educational material. We started the pilot with the schools in February 2023, concluding it in June 2023. Most of the involved schools are working on the **SAFER** approach for the second year, starting in September and ending at the end of the school year, even after the formal end of the project. This continuation testifies the positive impact that the work has reached in its first part. The teachers and the school staff told us that this approach has to be extended in order to be more effective: skills should become fully embedded across the curricula in all settings, and implemented by all—in other words, infiltrating the school ecosystem.

Furthermore, what has been very appreciated is the fact that the **SAFER** approach guides students toward discovering strategies that work best for them—strategies that are emotion- and context-specific, personalized, and culturally responsive. The whole-school approach is seen as a way of working rather than a defined programme.

Components of the **SAFER** vary, reflecting the unique nature of each school and or educative environment. It's not seen as a traditional prevention approach based on "learn about" the factors that influence bullying and wellbeing, rather **SAFER** places more emphasis on students actively "learning for". At this regard the **SAFER** Manuals gave and will continue to give a strong support in implementing the bullying prevention strategies inside and outside the school. Yes, because another element worth to be mentioned is the role of the community and the **SAFER** method evidences that bullying is best approached if considered as a social issue in the context of:

- school, family, community and social relationships
- society's expectations, values and structures.

We noticed further significant impacts such as the fact that the awareness about bullying empowered students to effectively recognize, prevent, and tackle it. Furthermore the importance of a positive school climate is put in evidence by students and teachers and the **SAFER** WSCA takes it into full account. We would like to conclude with what one of the headmasters pointed out: "**SAFER** gave us the opportunity to revise the "felt



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sense” of being in a school, which can arise from a greeting, the way problems are resolved, or how students work together; a positive climate is a school’s “heart and soul,” its “quality and character. It’s a strong component for preventing bullying”.

## ii Cyprus

The pilot phase of the **SAFER** program in Cyprus lasted from December 2022 to June 2023. During these months, the educational material developed within the framework of the program, was implemented in schools, under the coordination of the Cyprus Observatory on School Violence. Over 260 students, 35 teachers and many parents/ members of the educational community, from the three schools that participated in the pilot phase in Cyprus - Dimotiko Egkomis 1 (KB) and Dimotiko Aglantzias 3 in Nicosia, as well as Gymnasio Apostolou Pavlou in Paphos - were actively involved in the implementation.

During the workshops and the presentations that were held for teachers, the theoretical background of the **SAFER** program was presented, along with the topic of bullying, with parallel connection and framing with the content of the Teacher’s Guide. The teachers showed a keen interest and actively participated in the workshops, gaining knowledge and experience that contributed to the more effective implementation of the activities in their classroom.

Similarly, all students enthusiastically participated in the activities implemented inside and outside

the classroom. The cross-thematic implementation of the activities by the teachers contributed to the strengthening of the children’s skills, as well as to their empowerment about bullying. The children, through practical examples and experiential workshops, were informed about the types of bullying and how they can stand up to such incidents and prevent them from happening again either to themselves or to those around them, showing forth the values that **SAFER** stands for. In addition, they gained knowledge, skills and values that empowered them to become strong heroes in a safer, inclusive and zero-tolerance to bullying school environment.

At the same time, students with the contribution of their teachers and making the best use of their talent, inspiration and creativity composed songs and videos, painted walls and created posters, stamped their own anti-bullying messages on t-shirts, wrote stories, organized thematic days and organized creative activities during break time.

In addition, teachers and students from the three schools visited the House of Representatives in Nicosia and met the Ambassador of the program in Cyprus, President of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Annita Demetriou. It is noted that Mrs. Demetriou participated in one of the videos produced by the children. The President herself after the discussion with the children, stated that that “There is a prospect for a better world. By talking to our students we identify, once again, that the key to preventing and combating bullying, beyond strengthening the legislative framework, lies in education, in raising children with empathy, who respect human existence and accept diversity.”

Finally, during the pilot phase, the participation of parents and members of the educational community was also important. Strong and healthy relationships were promoted through lectures, seminars, workshops and activities with the children.

In conclusion, the piloting implementation of the **SAFER** program in Cyprus is considered success-

ful, since all the goals set were achieved and the slogan: “Be a HERO for reducing bullying to zero!” prevailed in all aspects of the actions implemented. Students, teachers and members of the educational community were thrilled and expressed their willingness to continue implementing the program during the next school year.

### iii North Macedonia

The **SAFER** project’s pilot phase in Kumanovo, North Macedonia has marked a significant milestone in promoting a safer and more inclusive educational environment. Implemented in two schools with the participation of 50 students, the activities have been instrumental in raising awareness about bullying and empowering students to effectively recognize, prevent, and address this prevalent issue.

Throughout the activities, students delved into various topics, including defining bullying as a phenomenon, identifying its various forms, recognizing alarming situations, and developing empathy through interactive exercises. Furthermore, they boosted their creative thinking skills, practiced free expression of thought, and learned the significance of collaborative problem-solving. The

enthusiastic engagement of the students underscored the impactful nature of these activities in fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of bullying and its effects.

The concrete outcomes derived from the activities are a clear indication of their effectiveness. Students emerged with an enhanced awareness of prevailing prejudices and myths related to bullying, equipping them with the tools to effectively challenge and dispel such misconceptions. They gained a profound understanding of the negative consequences of bullying, enabling them to recognize and address potentially harmful situations. Furthermore, the activities empowered the students to advocate for themselves and others, fostering a culture of support and solidarity within the school community.

A notable insight from the pilot phase was the discovery that the students’ initial belief that there was no bullying in their class was inaccurate. As one teacher shared, “It was interesting that at the beginning, all students from the class where we implemented the activities expressed that there is no bullying in their class, everyone loves each other, and no one bullies anyone. However, during the activities we found out together that the fact that there was not at all bullying among them was, unfortunately, not true. They actually did not have the strength to express themselves or it was not recognizable.” This testimonial vividly illustrates the transformative impact of the activities in revealing hidden occurrences of bullying and nurturing a safe space for open dialogue.

Lastly, the teachers who implemented these activities were deeply impressed by the effectiveness of the manuals utilized. They expressed a strong desire for wider implementation of these resources across all schools, recognizing their methodological and didactic approach as pivotal in fostering enduring knowledge and skills for identifying, preventing, and addressing bullying. They continued implementing the activities with other classes after the piloting ended.



## iv Bulgaria

Association Parents (Bulgaria) has actively started the pilot program that features the **SAFER** WSCA methodology and educational materials among students in the three partnering schools in the begging of the current school year. Prior to the launch of the program, the Association Parents (AP) team executed number of training workshop for participating teachers in order to present the philosophy and methodology of the **SAFER** WSCA approach. The six trainings provided knowledge, guidance and encouraged open discussions on the topic of aggression and bullying in school and online, and all the challenges teachers are facing in this respect including when relate with parents regarding bullying cases. Due to numerous challenges teachers are facing, including how to start a positive and effective conversation with children and parents on the bullying matters, the AP team remains actively involved throughout the implementation phase and we offered additional support to teachers by piloting the sessions in some of the classes and show them in practice how student from different ages reacts to the different instruments in the manuals. We will stay at all teachers' disposals and provide them with assistance when they need one throughout the process.

Each participating school initiated the program in May 2023 with an anonymous survey, in order to evaluate the current picture and at the end of the implementation of the program to measure the change achieved in students' mindset and behavior. Each school have chosen 3-4 classes, students in which will be matter of intervention and a control group, consisted of students not involved in the intervention. They all completed the specially designed questionnaire assessing their knowledge, attitude, emotions and observation over the school environment concerning bullying and aggression. The pilot phase will conclude with exit questionnaire to the same classes and control groups, which aims to measure the effect of **SAFER** WSCA on the students and respectively the environment.

There is overall positive feedback by the participating teachers and students, as the collaborative effort is building slowly commitment in the school staff to develop safer and new supportive educational environment for all children.

## v Portugal

We are excited to share our participation in the **SAFER** project - Social competences and Fundamental Rights for preventing bullying. This initiative, aimed at preventing bullying, conducted its pilot phase in four school clusters in the Algarve region, Portugal, during the academic year 2022/2023.

During this pilot phase, involving students from the 7th to the 9th grade, the activities outlined in the manuals developed by the project team were implemented. The schools positively engaged with the project, and at least one of the school clusters will continue to implement the activities in this academic year.

We are currently in the process of evaluating the impact of the project, and the results are expected to be available by the end of this year. The adopted methodology was comprehensive, following a whole school approach, and actively involved



students, teachers, school psychologists, parents, and other community members. We believe that this multifaceted collaboration will contribute significantly to creating a safer and healthier school environment.

## vi Greece

The Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Crete has actively involved over 130 students from five schools, comprising four primary schools and one junior high school, in a pilot program featuring the **SAFER** WSCA educational material. Commencing in March 2023 and concluding on May 30th for the High School and June 10th for the primary schools, this initiative has marked a significant step toward fostering a safer and more inclusive learning environment.

Prior to the launch of the program, the pedagogical team at RDPSEC organized a training workshop for participating teachers. This session introduced the philosophy and methodology underpinning the **SAFER** WSCA approach, providing invaluable guidance and fostering open discussions. The pedagogical team remained actively involved throughout the implementation, offering support to teachers through experiential workshops, participation in awareness-raising meetings with parents, and providing assistance when needed.

Each participating school initiated the program in March 2023 with an anonymous survey, designed for evaluative purposes. Both the experimental group, comprising students subject to the intervention, and the control group, consisting of students not involved in the intervention, completed questionnaires gauging their knowledge, feelings, attitudes, and perceived sense of the school environment regarding bullying. Subsequently, schools selected Learning Experiences (LEs) tailored to their students' needs, covering themes such as definitions and types of bullying, human rights, values, conflict resolution, and effective communication.



Teachers seamlessly integrated these lessons with activities in the Students' Workbook, encouraging parental involvement through assigned activities in the Guide for Parents and the Educational Community. The pilot phase concluded with the administration of the same questionnaire to both experimental and control groups, aiming to measure the impact of the **SAFER** WSCA approach to bullying. The analysis and results of this evaluation will be available in the coming weeks.

Feedback from participating teachers and students has been overwhelmingly positive, with reports highlighting the educational materials' engaging and thought-provoking nature. Participants expressed increased awareness on various aspects of bullying. Moreover, all teachers conveyed their eagerness to continue using the manuals with additional student groups and recommended them to their colleagues. This collaborative effort reflects a commitment to cultivating a safer and more supportive educational environment for all.





## B. Students' Voices

The Students' Voices is a free space where the students can present their stories about bullying and cyberbullying experiences and where is possible to share opinions and proposals. The social platform guaranties the anonymity of the students and the posts are checked by experts and teachers, in order to avoid any possible bad use of the space.

To be able to use the platform, the students must be registered. After the registration, the new users are free to present their opinions and share their stories and experiences.

In the platform is specified that to use the platform, some rules have to be respected:

- (1) Students must be over the age of 14
- (2) It is prohibited to post contents that is offensive, racist, insulting or discriminatory, obscene and contrary to the legal provisions in force concerning the protection of personal data, honor, decorum and reputation.
- (3) Content in violation of copyright laws is prohibited.
- (4) Before being published, content shall be moderated by the staff managing the platform.

- (5) In the event of violation of these conditions of use the **SAFER** partnership reserves the right, at its sole discretion, not to publish the content entered, to block the author of the prohibited conduct and, where appropriate, to communicate any relevant circumstances to the competent authorities.

The platform allows the students to communicate with experts of Cyberbullying and Bulling asking general and not personal questions about the issue.

The Student's voices platform is available in all the partnership languages and the students can interact using their native language. However, a European space "Social Wall" is available for an interaction among all the students in all the countries. In this space, they will be asked to communicate in English.

**The platform will be opened on February 2024.**

**Fondazione Hallgarten Francheti -  
Centro Studi Villa Montesca**





## C. Preparation for the Final Conference in Brussels

An urgent call on Europe and society to deal with the ever-rising problem of bullying is going to be launched at the ERASMUS+ funded project “**SAFER** - SociAl competences and FundamEntal Rights for preventing bullying” final Conference that will be held on March 13th, 2024 in Brussels, organized by the European Antibullying Network (EAN)<sup>1</sup>.

The conference will be chaired by Mr. Costas Yannopoulos, EAN President/ President, Board of Directors, The Smile of the Child, Greece, with the presence of all **SAFER** partners, along with members of the Network from different European countries, public officials, institutional actors from Brussels, academia and professionals active in the field of child protection.

Bullying and its various forms are a major concern in schools and among children, teachers, parents and practitioners and the growing extent of the problem will be highlighted. Bullying needs to be addressed not only among children, but also in a wider context, while support has to be provided to both children who bully and children who are bullied.

The conference will emphasize the absolute urgency to address the widespread and still growing problem of bullying in our society and highlight a number of recommendations to the Member States and European Institutions for specific actions to combat bullying. A **SAFER** recommendations policy document will be the platform for the process of pursuing this objective from within the European Antibullying Network.

Mrs. Maria Rita Bracchini, as EAN Vice-President and **SAFER** PROJECT coordinator, will showcase. The Whole School and Community Approach, which the **SAFER** project has been developing during the last 2 years of the project’s lifetime. Apart from this strategic approach, the confer-



ence will offer to participants an ample opportunity to exchange useful experiences and practical approaches from all **SAFER** partners working within school communities, prevention methods, as well as the use of a new innovative STUDENT VOICES PLATFORM, a private space where students can share their views and beliefs, express their thoughts, feelings, experiences and voices about bullying.

During the event, a team of students from different European schools will present their direct experiences and views on the problem, the way they are dealing with bullying incidents in their school environment either as those bullying, being bullied or as bystanders.

### European Antibullying Network



<sup>1</sup> EAN was established in 2014 as a result of the respective EU-funded (Daphne III) project and was officially registered in Brussels in March 2015. EAN is an active network of organizations working in and across Europe to combat bullying and school violence. Today it comprises 22 members from 14 European countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, North Macedonia, Romania, Spain and the UK)

## Forth FACE-TO-FACE meeting

# 3

The fourth Transnational Project Meeting of SAFER was hosted by Center for Intercultural Dialogue, in Skopje, North Macedonia, on the 25th and 26th of October 2023. All partners of the SAFER project travelled from six countries (Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Portugal Cyprus and Belgium) to discuss the progress of the project implementation.

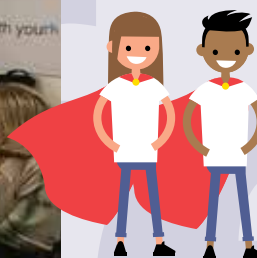
During the meeting, the partners presented and finalized the achieved progress up to date, on each work package, according to each partners' responsibilities. Furthermore, they presented the activities that took place in each country concerning the pilot phase in schools. All the presentations were full of students' activities, inspired creations and other actions implemented by the whole school community against bullying. All the partners were engaged to continue implement-

ing various actions and establish the cooperation with their schools, aiming to ensure the sustainability of the project.

The consortium, also, discussed on the online discussion platform "Student Voices" and the preparation of the Final Conference that will take place in Brussels on the 13th of March 2024, with the participation of the teachers, students and parents that were involved in the implementation of the project.

Finally, the consortium exchanged ideas regarding the draft of the "Policy Recommendations and Support for Antibullying Policy Reform".

### Cyprus Observatory on School Violence Team





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Find out more about the SAFER project



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